

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN
EDITION 2
PART 2**

WELCOME BACK, I'M JIM BENSON.

MANY OF US WILL EXPERIENCE A TRAUMATIC EVENT IN OUR LIFETIME. IT COULD BE ONE OF A NUMBER OF THINGS, WAR, AN ACCIDENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT.

SOMETIMES THE TRAUMA WON'T GO AWAY. IT CAN BE CRIPPLING.

THE VA HAS SEVERAL PROGRAMS TO HELP VETERANS DEALING WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, OR PTSD.

DANIELLE MCDAVIT TAKES US INSIDE THE DEPARTMENT'S UNIQUE PROGRAM FOR WOMEN VETERANS.

MCDAVIT: THESE WOMEN: SEEMINGLY HAPPY. BUT BEHIND THE SMILES AND LAUGHTER THEY SHARE THE BOND OF TRAUMA.

GLORIA GRACE, PROGRAM COORDINATOR: THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE HAVE REACTIONS TO TRAUMA. YOU KNOW WE ALL REACT TO SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAPPENING TO US.

MCDAVIT: BUT SOME OF US CONTINUE TO HAVE REACTIONS. PEOPLE WHO SUFFER FROM POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, PTSD, SUFFER FROM A NUMBER OF SYMPTOMS, INCLUDING FLASHBACKS, AVOIDANCE, AND THE FEAR OF CONSTANTLY BEING IN DANGER.

DARRAH WESTRUP, PhD., PALO ALTO VAMC, IT'S ALMOST LIKE A FIRE ALARM OR SMOKE ALARM THAT'S GOING AT ALL TIMES, AND IT SENDS A DANGER SIGNAL, BUT IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHEN THERE'S ACTUALLY A FIRE OR WHEN THERE ISN'T.

MCDAVIT: TO HELP THESE WOMEN COPE WITH TRAUMA, VA OFFERS A UNIQUE, 60-DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR FEMALE VETERANS. THEY LIVE HERE, AT THE WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH CENTER IN MENLO PARK, CALIFORNIA, A SURPRISINGLY TRANQUIL SPACE THAT DOCTOR DARRAH WESTRUP SAYS LOOKS MORE LIKE A RETREAT THAN A HOSPITAL.

WESTRUP: I LOVE IT HERE. IN THE SPRING IT'S AMAZING, JUST FLOWERS EVERYWHERE, ALL THE TRELLISES ARE COVERED IN BLOSSOMS. AND THOSE ARE ALL FLOWERING BUSHES, IT'S REALLY

LOVELY.

MCDAVIT: BUT IT'S NOT REALLY A RETREAT, IT'S HARD WORK.

WESTRUP: IT'S INCREDIBLY TOUGH WORK, BUT AT LEAST THEY CAN DO IT IN A SETTING THAT'S ENJOYABLE.

KNOWING THAT THE STRUGGLE FROM TIME TO TIME WITH SYMPTOMS OF PTSD ARE SOMETIMES WORSE THAN AT OTHER TIMES AND AT THE SAME TIME REALLY GETTING CLEAR THAT YOU ARE LARGER THAN YOUR PTSD, YOU'RE MORE THAN THAT.

MCDAVIT: THE RECOVERY PROGRAM COVERS ALL KINDS OF TRAUMA, INCLUDING SEXUAL TRAUMA WHILE SERVING IN THE MILITARY. WITH THE HELP OF DOCTOR WESTRUP AND GLORIA GRACE, WOMEN VETERANS LEARN ABOUT THEIR DEBILITATING SYMPTOMS.

WESTRUP: EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE REAL COMMON FEATURES TO PTSD REGARDLESS OF WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH IT, THERE ARE GENDER DIFFERENCES, AND WE FEEL THAT WE CAN BOTH MEET, BETTER MEET THOSE NEEDS IF WE TREAT WOMEN AND MEN SEPARATELY.

SHERYL, PTSD PATIENT: FOR A LONG TIME I WASN'T SURE WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME. I DIDN'T KNOW IT RELATED TO ME, I THOUGHT IT RELATED TO GUYS THAT CAME FROM WAR.

MCDAVIT: SHERYL'S PTSD STEMS FROM CHILDHOOD AND MILITARY-RELATED TRAUMA. LIKE MANY PTSD PATIENTS, SHE SPENT YEARS THINKING SHE WAS CRAZY. ALMOST READY TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM, SHERYL KNOWS SHE'S OK, SHE'S LEARNED HOW TO COPE WITH THE SYMPTOMS, AND SHE'S VERY PROUD OF HER WORK HERE, ESPECIALLY THE QUILT PROJECT.

DURING THEIR STAY, EACH GROUP OF WOMEN MAKE ONE PANEL OF ONE QUILT. THE PANELS ARE SEWN TOGETHER AND THE QUILTS ARE ON DISPLAY INSIDE THE CENTER. ON THE QUILTS PHRASES LIKE 'IT'S ABOUT CHANGE' AND 'RECLAIMING OUR LIVES'.

SHERYL: SO I'M UNVEILING OUR PANEL THAT WE'RE GOING TO BE PRESENTING TO OUR STAFF HERE.

THERE'S A BABY PICTURE OF ME, AND A PICTURE OF A DOLL. IT'S REFLECTING, UM, YOU HAVE TO LOVE YOUR INNER CHILD, AND SOMETIMES IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO DO THAT, UNLESS YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH IT AND THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I WORKED ON HERE,

SO THAT'S WHAT MY PANEL REFLECTS.

JO ANN, PTSD PATIENT: IT'S REALLY NICE TO HAVE THE SUPPORT NETWORK THAT YOU GET HERE.

WESTRUP: AND YOU'RE ALL, YOU'RE ALL DIFFERENT AGES.

JO ANN: EXACTLY, EXACTLY, AND YOU KNOW THEY'RE FROM DIFFERENT STATES, TOO.

MCDAVIT: THE BONDS AND FRIENDSHIPS FORMED ARE PART OF THE THERAPY. JO ANN AND DJ MET THROUGH VA AND ARE NOW GOOD FRIENDS. A FEW YEARS AGO, JO ANN WAS RAPED WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY. DJ IS ALSO A VETERAN AND VICTIM OF SEXUAL TRAUMA WHILE SERVING IN THE MILITARY. BUT DJ ONLY RECENTLY FOUND THE HELP SHE NEEDED.

DJ: WHAT HAPPENED TO ME HAPPENED IN THE 70S, YOU KNOW, THAT'S A LONG TIME, IT'S BEEN CLOSE TO 30 YEARS. I'VE SUFFERED WITH THESE SYMPTOMS FOR THIRTY YEARS, AND BEEN IN AND OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, HAD NUMEROUS DIAGNOSES, NOBODY COULD REALLY TELL ME WHAT WAS WRONG, OR WHY I BEHAVED THE WAY I DID AND THEREFORE THEY COULDN'T GIVE ME ANY TOOLS TO CHANGE IT. SO I WENT THROUGH A LONG PERIOD OF TIME SUFFERING A GREAT DEAL AND FINALLY I GOT TO THE POINT WHERE I ACTUALLY ISOLATED MYSELF IN MY HOME FOR ALMOST 6 YEARS.

I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH THIS LONGER THAN SHE'S BEEN ALIVE, YOU KNOW, THAT REALLY KIND OF PUTS THINGS IN SOME PERSPECTIVE. I JUST REALLY WANT THESE YOUNG WOMEN TO KNOW THAT THERE'S AN OPTION.

BENSON: FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WOMEN'S TRAUMA RECOVERY PROGRAM DIAL 1-800-827-1000 OR LOG ON TO WWW.WOMENVETSPTSD.VA.GOV.

YOU CAN FIND OTHER VA PROVIDED PTSD COUNSELING PROGRAMS AT WWW.VA.GOV.

THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, ON THE FOURTH DAY OF THE U.S. GROUND ASSAULT DURING OPERATION DESERT STORM, MAJOR RHONDA CORNUM'S BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER CAME UNDER ATTACK WHILE ON A RESCUE MISSION TO PICK UP A DOWNED PILOT. FIVE OF HER EIGHT CREW MEMBERS DIED. CORNUM WAS CAPTURED BY IRAQI SOLDIERS AND HELD FOR EIGHT DAYS. HERE IS HER STORY.

COLONEL RHONDA CORNUM, U.S. ARMY: I LOOKED UP AND THERE WERE FIVE GUYS WITH GUNS POINTED AT ME AND I SAID, WELL, GUESS I'M NOT DEAD AFTER ALL, AND HERE I AM. I'M A POW. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG IT WILL LAST AND YOU DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL SURVIVE.

I WAS THE FLIGHT SURGEON - AN F-16 PILOT HAS BEEN SHOT DOWN - HE'S ON THE GROUND ON HIS RADIO. HE KNOWS HE'S GOT A BROKEN LEG AND WE ARE THE CLOSEST HELICOPTER UNIT TO GO GET HIM.

SO WE WERE GETTING VECTORED IN AND ABOUT A MILE FROM HIM THEY JUST OPENED FIRE ON US AND THEY BLEW THE TAIL BOOM OFF MY AIRCRAFT AND WE IMMEDIATELY CRASHED.

WE HAD THE TWO PILOTS, TWO DOOR GUNNERS, THREE PATHFINDERS AND ME. AND THERE WERE THREE SURVIVORS. I WAS CONSCIOUS AS WE WERE GETTING SHOT AT AND THE LAST THING I THOUGHT WAS, AT LEAST I AM DYING DOING SOMETHING HONORABLE.

I BROKE BOTH OF MY ARMS, BLEW OUT MY KNEE AND A COUPLE OF OTHER MINOR THINGS. I PUSHED MYSELF OUT FROM UNDER THIS PIECE OF THE WRECK AND THEN I REALIZED I COULDN'T TURN OVER. WHEN I TRIED THE NEXT TIME I LOOKED UP AND THERE WERE FIVE GUYS WITH GUNS POINTED AT ME.

I WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE AFRAID EXCEPT I WAS SO GRATEFUL TO BE ALIVE THAT, I MEAN IT WAS CLEAR TO ME I ONLY HAD TWO CHOICES AT THAT POINT. I MEAN WE WERE CLEARLY IN IRAQ. I WAS EITHER GOING TO BE KILLED OR I WAS GOING TO BE A PRISONER. THERE WASN'T GOING TO BE SOME THIRD GREAT DEAL OUT THERE, SO FOR ME I THOUGHT YOU KNOW BEING CAPTURED WAS A LOT BETTER THAN BEING DEAD.

THEY THROW ME DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS GROUP AND THERE WAS SERGEANT DUNLAP. I REMEMBER BEING REALLY, REALLY HAPPY TO SEE HIM, BECAUSE THEN I WASN'T ALONE AND THAT WAS A REALLY IMPORTANT THING.

THEY EACH TAKE OUT A REVOLVER AND HELD IT AT THE BACK OF OUR HEADS AND YOU KNOW IT'S LIKE "WE'RE GONNA EXECUTE YOU NOW." OBVIOUSLY THEY DECIDED NOT TO DO IT OR ELSE IT WAS EMPTY. I DECIDED WELL, I HAVE THE CHANCE TO SAY "THANK YOU, GOD." SO THEY STOOD US BACK UP AND TOOK US TO THE NEXT BUNKER AND HAD THEY SAME BUNCH OF QUESTIONS. WE DIDN'T TELL THEM ANYTHING.

I GOT MEDICAL ATTENTION OF SOME SORT, I GUESS THE THIRD DAY I

WAS THERE. THEY HAD SOME GUY AND HE WAS BAD. HE CAME IN AND HE SORT OF TIED MY ARMS TOGETHER, BUT AS SOON AS HE LEFT I HAD SERGEANT DUNLAP UNDO IT AND REDO IT. I DIDN'T GET THEM SET, LIKE, IN THE SHAPE THAT ARMS ARE SUPPOSED TO GO TO UNTIL DAY 5 WE WERE IN BAGHDAD.

I WAS HAPPILY SURPRISED WHEN THE PRISONER EXCHANGE HAPPENED AFTER ONLY SEVEN DAYS. WE GOT SHOT DOWN ON THE 27TH AND THEY ACTUALLY CALLED THE WAR OFF ON, I THINK 8:00 IN THE MORNING ON THEY 28TH.

PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH, ADDRESSING JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS: AGGRESSION IS DEFEATED, THE WAR IS OVER.

CORNUM: WE ALL DIDN'T KNOW THAT, OF COURSE, BUT WE ALL KNEW THAT IT WAS CLOSE TO BEING OVER. IN THE MORNING THEY PUT THOSE YELLOW POW COSTUMES ON US THAT EVERYBODY SAW ON TV. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE WE WERE GOING, BUT MARCHED OFF AND INTO A HOTEL LOBBY. INSIDE THE LOBBY, THEY TOOK OFF THE BLINDFOLD AND SAID, "YOU'RE WITH THE RED CROSS, AND YOU KNOW, WE'RE COMING TO GET YOU."

I LOOKED AT IT AS A POSITIVE THING, YOU KNOW, SORT OF, SO FROM NOW ON I GAUGE EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS AS TO WELL, HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO THAT? AND SO IT MAKES YOU MUCH MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT FACING JUST ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE. YOU LEARN TO FIND SOME STRENGTH IN WHAT HAPPENED. I HAVE BEEN A DIFFERENT AND I BELIEVE A BETTER COMMANDER.

BENSON: COLONEL CORNUM WROTE A BOOK ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES TITLED, 'SHE WENT TO WAR'. SHE SERVES AS A MEMBER OF A VA ADVISORY BOARD FOR EX PRISONERS OF WAR.

UP NEXT, A SALUTE TO AMERICA'S HEROES. THE AMERICAN VETERAN WILL BE RIGHT BACK.

PRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

END OF TRANSCRIPT